

# Japan Christian Activity News

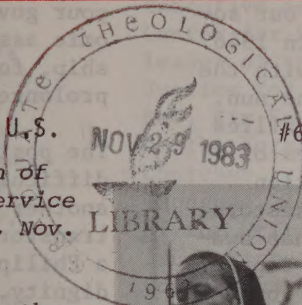
PUBLISHED

BY NCC J

Editor:

Shoji Tsutomu

ISSN: 0021-4353



PHILIPPINE APPEAL TO JAPAN AND U.S.

#603 November 18, 1983

*Address by Sister Christine Tan of the Philippines to a worship service at Shinano Machi Church, Tokyo, Nov. 2, 1983.*

When martial law was imposed on the Philippines, on September 21, 1972, my country underwent the national trauma of the dispossessed. By the stroke of one signature, that of Ferdinand Marcos, fifty-million Filipinos suddenly found themselves stripped of justice, freedom, and basic constitutional rights.

For eleven years, ours has been, and continues to be, an oppressive regime. Our minds were deliberately made dull by withholding vital information from us, robbing us of participation in government. Our spirits were made weak by threats, harassment, penalties and punishment. Our consciences turned callous because of a bankruptcy of morality in all levels of government. The Filipino had less to eat, more to suffer so that by 1982, 70% of all Filipinos had less than three meals a day.

It was considered subversive to speak one's mind, to assemble, even to teach truth and justice to our student population. How many of our friends and family have been arbitrarily arrested, detained in prison without charge for years, tortured through the most scientific methods, killed secretly and buried in common graves?

For eleven years, most of us fifty-million Filipinos cowered with fear, paralyzed to do what we deemed right. We were a passive mass of confused humanity.



The Filipino is compared to the water buffalo--slow, passive, capable of enduring much cruelty. But once the water buffalos gets angry, he is able to gouge out the eyeballs of the aggressor.

Last August 21, 1983, Senator Benigno Aquino was assassinated at the Manila International Airport. Aquino's assassination was the crucial moment in our political history, when the Filipino suddenly turned angry. From an eleven year paralysis, millions of Filipinos have risen. With one voice they have cried, "Enough!" Enough of murder, enough of torture, enough of sham, extravagance, cronyism, enough of a lop-sided set of priorities. Their grief turned to anger, courage, and commitment.

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NATIONAL CHRISTIAN COUNCIL Room 24, 2-3-18 Nishiwaseda, Shinjuku-ku, Tokyo 160 Japan

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Since August 21, we have had more rallies involving millions, and more creative forms of protest than all the mass demonstrations held since our so-called political independence in 1946. The rich march in the streets with the street-sweeper, the lawyers, the nun. The urban poor ride home from rallies to their slums in the limousines of the Makati elite. Study/reflection groups have mushroomed in all sectors of society. The middle class has awakened to political conversion. Popular movements have arisen. We cry for a radical change, for a resignation of our entire government, from Marcos down to the last cabinet member, for our present government, isolated and crumbling, no longer holds the trust of the people.

Marcos and the military have met this growing militancy with greater repressive measures; such as, violent confrontation in rallies where rallyists are brutally shot and killed, by the issuance of secret decrees against peace-loving people, particularly decree #1834 which makes punishable by death any person found in a meeting or in a rally.

But today, the fresh and strong tide of courage and patriotism can no longer be quelled by the gun. During the depressing years of martial law, our choice was limited to dictatorship or communism. Between these two poles was a vacuum. After August 21 of this year, this vacuum was filled suddenly by a new opposition from all classes, all sectors of society, from various levels of political consciousness. Thousands find themselves in the streets in rallies of protest and indignation. Others initiate study groups, think tanks, or assessment cells. Everyday, chapters of popular people's resistance are organized all over the country's more than 7000 islands. This movement is identical to the popular mood, aspiration, struggle. It is this opposition that will decide what kind of society and government we Filipinos want for our future.

We therefore plead with you, our Japanese friends, to be alive in this, our renewed struggle, by demanding from your government a stoppage to all economic assistance to our present dictatorship, for Japan's assistance means prolonged repression.

The post-Marcos era will be extremely difficult. We do not wish to become another Japan, but we do dream of being transformed into a new Philippines, a Philippines in which we can live with dignity, and possess enough freedom and democratic space to clean up our house and fashion our own future. We are whole-heartedly pledged to work with all our resources and might, to make sacrifices for the realization of this re-captured hope.

If and when the day comes that we Filipinos earn freedom from tyranny and foreign political economic domination, then we need your help. Help us by your non-involvement in our society. Leave our seas and rivers, our forests and dens of prostitution. Keep your multinationals home, stop exploiting our cheap labor. Help us by your non-interference in our lives.

If however, it becomes our destiny that once again we become the victims of American exploitation by forcing on us a government backed in full force by the U.S. government, let not the world judge that we Filipinos are not capable of self-government. Rather, that in a shining moment in the history of humanity, a little people rose together, and with all the might and courage they had, they, like Benigno Aquino bravely gave their lives in battle against the giant of greed and imperialism.

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*This appeal was heard by some 200 people who attended the worship service following the close of the International Conference (see next article). The worshippers marched in a candlelight procession following the service, singing and chanting from Shinano Machi Church to St. Ignatius Catholic Church.*



## PHILIPPINES AND KOREA FOCUS OF INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE

De, from Japan, Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, the U.S. and the United Kingdom including Catholic and Protestant ministers, lawyers, professors, parliamentarians, and former government officials, have gathered for the International Conference on 'The Human Rights Situation in Korea and the Philippines, and Peace in Asia', held in Tokyo, November 1-2, 1983.

These were the opening words of the statement which concluded the International Conference, co-sponsored by National Christian Council-Japan, and the Japan Catholic Commission on Justice and Peace. The paper was endorsed by about 70 Japanese participants, secular and Christian, including members of Japan's National Diet, and overseas participants. It was then brought to both the Prime Ministers office and U.S. Embassy.

Providing a forum for personal witness of human rights conditions in various countries, participants heard from Dr. Lee Moon-Young of the Korean National Council of Churches Human Rights Committee, and a former professor of Koryo University in Seoul. He was a fellow defendant in the Kim Dae Jung trial and addressed the conference with the experience of one who has been arrested 15 times, tortured once, and spent a total of nearly 5 years in jail.

Dr. SUMIYA Mikio, President of Tokyo Christian Women's College, and director of NCC-CCRAI, emphasized economic development as closely tied to violations in human rights. For in any Asian countries, development is carried out by dictatorial regimes with the support of and for the benefit of foreign powers. Dr. Sumiya used the words "development dictatorship" as the key term of his speech.

Other participants on the panel of speakers were, from the Philippines: Attorney Emilio Capulong, Chair of the Protestant Lawyers League, Pro-

fessor Ed Garcia, Assistant Director of the Third World Studies Center, University of the Philippines, Attorney Rene Saguisag, Vice President of MABINI, and Sister Christine Tan, Executive Secretary of the Ecumenical Center for Social Concerns, and a leader of the Justice for Aquino, Justice for All group. From Korea: Rev. Kim So-Young, General Secretary of the Korean National Council of Churches. From Thailand: Mr. Thongbai Thongpao, lawyer and Acting President of the Writer's Association in Thailand. Representing the International Commission of Jurists, Mr. Niall MacDermot (British), Secretary General of the Commission. From the United States of America: Ms. Patricia Derian, Former Assistant Secretary for Human Rights at the Department of State during the Carter administration, Rev. Dwain Epps, representing the World Council of Churches, and the International Affairs section of the National Council of Churches-USA, Rev. Pharis Harvey, Executive Secretary of the North American Coalition for Human Rights in Korea, and Mr. Stephan Schneebaum, of the International Human Rights Law Group and the International League for Human Rights.

The Conference statement continued to highlight recent events, emphasizing the gravity of crisis in Asia. It listed the assassination of Senator Benigno Aquino on August 21, 1983, the shooting down of the Korean Airline flight, and the bomb explosion in Rangoon which killed Korean Cabinet Ministers. "These successive shocking incidents clearly reveal that the Asian theatre is dangerous and insecure," the paper read. Compounding these events came the U.S. military invasion of Grenada, for which the Conference took the position of "indignation to see the independence of a small country so violently devastated by a super-power."

Causes of human rights violations which the statement cited included military expansion by the super-powers and U.S. support to dictatorial regimes in order to maintain its military

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bases in Korea and the Philippines, and to maintain its dominant economic position.

The paper also criticized Japan's influence over the destinies of both Korea and the Philippines for the purpose of securing resources, cheap labor, and markets. "The multinational corporations of both Japan and the U.S. absorb the profits of development which destroys the lives of people.

In light of these realities, the visit of President Reagan to Korea and Japan was seen by the conference as having serious implications. "After the invasion of Grenada, if President Reagan is welcomed in his visit to Japan, it means that the military adventurism shown in the invasion is supported by the people of Japan. Undoubtedly, President Reagan's visit to Japan and Korea promotes the further development of military cooperation with the U.S. and that between Japan and Korea. Also, his visit to Korea may be seen as a new expression of support for the Chun Doo-Hwan regime...This goes against the aspirations of the Korean people struggling for freedom and democracy. For these reasons, we cannot welcome President Reagan to Japan and support the Korean peoples' desire that he also cancel his trip to Korea."

The following are the demands made by the Conference statement:

(1) We demand that the sovereignty of human rights and independence of the people, particularly in Korea and the Philippines, be respected as being indispensable for justice and true stability in Asia and we ask that both governments act on this basis.

(2) We demand that the U.S. and Japanese governments stop all policies which increase militarization and nuclearization in Asia and stop development policies which increase the gap between the rich and the poor causing the deterioration of human rights.

(3) We demand that both governments reconsider their policies so that

their methods of economic aid and investment towards Asian countries truly benefit the people especially of Korea and the Philippines.

The conference was opened with prayer by Bishop N. Soma of the Catholic Justice and Peace Commission, and closed with Dr. LEE Inha, Moderator of the NCC. The entire meeting was essentially a process of confirming international solidarity. The words of Professor Ed Garcia of the Philippines capture the hope which brought the international participants together:

"Now I sense a determination on the part of our people to write our own history at long last, no matter how painful, no matter what the cost. We must make sense of one man's death and countless others, to give fuller meaning to the lives of those still with us in cities and farms, and to the lives of our children whose laughter and dreams, whose prayers and songs tell us of a new world in the making."

#### DISABLED PERSONS WEEK PROMOTES INVOLVEMENT IN THE CHURCH

On the beautiful Sunday afternoon of November 13, a "Disabled Persons and the Church" meeting was held to climax a week of activities encouraging involvement in the church. The gathering was sponsored by the Task Force of Disabled Persons and the Church of the NCC-J and the Catholic Association for Disabled People. The meeting was held at the Catholic Center in Tokyo and began with a service lead by Mr. SHIMAZAKI Mitsumasa, chairperson of the Task Force. Sign language interpretation was used as 130 participants sang "Allelujah and Amen" at the close of the service. Discussions following the service brought participants together and provided fellowship in the group.

アーメン ハレルヤ



## NCC DELEGATES VISIT CHINA

From October 21 to 29 the 11 NCC delegates headed by the former primate of the Japan Seikokai, NAKAMICHI Yoshio visited China by the invitation of the China Christian Council and the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement Committee. This was the first occasion for the churches in Japan to establish official relations.

In Shanghai, the group visited Xinchang People's Commune near Shanghai and a church in Xinchang-zhen. On Oct. 23, Sunday, we divided into two groups: I was honored to preach at the Muoen Church in Shanghai while the other group visited the Community Church where Rev. Nakamichi preached. In the Muoen Church there were two morning services: one at 7 AM attended by 16,000 people, and one at 9 AM attended by 14,000 people. The Bible Classes were held on Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday, where an average of 200 people attended each one. Three full time and three part-time pastors with seven lay leaders form a committee for the church administrative board.

We visited Soozhou, Nanjing and Beijing, where we were also warmly welcomed by many church leaders and taken to churches. When we visited the Nanjing Theological Seminary we talked with the President K.H. Ting and seven other professors. At present there are 124 students (1/3 are women) at the seminary. We were very fortunate in being able to visit some historical places.

Church membership has been increasing rapidly during the last thirty-three years. We were told that there are three million Protestants and 3.5 million Catholics in China. During the Cultural Revolution, church meetings were prohibited, the Bible and books were taken away. The ministers were sent to work in factories and on farms. This period provided training for them, as they worked among and with the people without showing any signs of discouragement, but



*The congregation at Muoen Church  
in Shanghai*

supported themselves with memorized Bible verses. As soon as the freedom of faith was restored, their work experiences became powerful faith witnesses among the people. Many people have joined the churches as a result of this testimony. At the same time, the ministers who shared the workers experiences, can now better understand the people they serve.

I am impressed that the Christians in China who contribute to building the state have also tried to understand the Bible from the perspective of the people. This has helped to root Christianity in the land in an effort to remove its label of "foreign religion." It is noteworthy that Christians have overcome denominational divisions in China, led by the principle of the Chinese Christian Three-Self Patriotic Movement.

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## MISSIONARIES STUDY ANCESTOR WORSHIP

Is it really worship? Do rites equal ritual equal worship? What is the relationship between rites (religion) and faith? What is the truth behind Buddhist funeral practices and memorial services? Is Buddhist truth different from Christian truth? Is the Buddhist hotoke anything like the child of God? Have the concepts behind the rites significantly changed?

These and a host of similar questions were brought to a seminar for missionaries, held at the Kansai Seminar House in Kyoto October 28-29 under the aegis of the NCC Center for the Study of Japanese Religions. The theme "Ancestor Worship and Christianity" has been receiving renewed attention in Japanese Christian circles since the publication in March of a Japanese Catholic statement treating the veneration of ancestors as a natural part of human life and of the natural order of creation, acceptable to the Creator and hence, embraceable by the Church. A flurry of negative response has led to a revision of the statement, yet to be published, which will no doubt be considerably watered down. Protestant objections tended to raise the question of relationship to the traditional Imperial system and the rites relating to the Imperial ancestors (regarded as the ancestors of the entire nation-family), observed at the Ise, Yasukuni, and Meiji Shrines. The fifty participants, about half Catholic and half Protestant, were more inclined to a theological or pastoral perspective and less alert to the political implications, perhaps, but the approach of the two speakers was different from either.

The first lecture, by Professor FUJII Masao of Taisho University in Tokyo, was entitled "Buddhism and Ancestor Worship." Emphasizing the syncretistic incorporation of primitive folk-religion into established Buddhist practice, he illustrated their symbiotic relationship in which the folk

tradition is institutionalized by a process of Buddhization while Buddhism itself is folk-lorized and fed back into folk-religion. The Buddhism of Japan is further complicated by differences coming from two routes of entry: The northern route via China and Korea, and the southern route from ancient Ceylon. Using slides to illustrate urban and rural Buddhist funeral practices today, Professor Fujii contributed greatly to our understanding of the rites and traditions associated with Japanese funerals and the series of memorial services continuing for 33 or 50 years in a given situation. These earthly observances are thought to parallel an other-worldly process by which the deceased are gradually purified until a merging of identity within a sort of Buddha-hood or oversoul. In modern secularized Japan, these rites are becoming privatized and abbreviated and an extensive "funeral business" has developed. This Japanese development is a far cry from the teaching of Gautama who did not mention death and had no funeral, so far as is known though he did carry the caskets of his mother and father.

Professor GORAI Shigeru, of the Otani University in Kyoto, addressed the seminar on "Folk Religion and the Cult of the Ancestors." He preferred to use the term "cult" rather than worship as he opened up a picture of the long process that we might call "the Shintoization" of an extremely primitive folk religion which he believes is traceable back to the Jomon era before 2500 B.C. Parts of the underlying folk religion, like worship of the fox god on a small mound through a Shaman or God-substitute priest, are rejected by Buddhism, Shinto, and the New Religions, but they still have meaning for the common people. Professor Gorai pointed out that one would expect that the primitive folk ideas and practices would disappear in a scientific secular society, but in Japan they are kept alive by the Japanese nature orientation. Making use of Buddhism and Shintoism, but misunderstanding them, folk relig-

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ion even today sees the ancestors as the source of food and guarantors of security. The spirit of a person who died in anger or in strange circumstances is to be feared and placated lest (s)he harm the living instead of protecting and providing. Professor Gorai described the relationship between fox worship and the ancestor cult and pointed out that wherever you follow folk religion, you come to ancestor cultism.

After visiting the Otani Honbyō, the mausoleum of Shinran where the faithful of the Pure Land Sect can join the saint by having some of their bones (particularly the throat bone -nodobotoke- which resembles a sitting Buddha) deposited in special lockers, the seminar held a closing panel discussion trying to digest and evaluate. I suspect that the conclusions we took home were as numerous as the participants and even then, outnumbered by the remaining questions, but the two days were of great value in the increased understanding they gave of the deep undercurrent of the ancestor cult and what it means for the rooting of the Christian gospel in this land.

Alden Matthews

#### CHRISTIAN EDUCATION WEEK SUPPORTS KOREAN CHRISTIAN BROADCASTING SYSTEM

"Let's Support the Korean Christian Broadcasting System" was the theme of the 33rd Christian Education Week, October 17-24, sponsored by the Christian Education Department of the National Christian Council in Japan.

The purpose of this designated week was to promote Christian Education in churches, to participate in mission and service programs abroad, and to be in Christian sharing through offerings.

After 1980 the Korean government prohibited CBS from carrying advertisement, limiting their program capability. The Christian Education week aims to raise ¥10 million.



*The Church delegates from Japan were welcomed by children of the public school in Xinchang-Zhen. The visit was an experience showing how fully the church has been accepted into Chinese culture and society.*

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Rev. USHIROKU Toshio, the Moderator of the United Church of Christ in Japan, expressed a confession of the church's responsibility for the war with China. Chinese delegates expressed appreciation for the sincerity of the Japanese, but emphasized that the overwhelming majority of Christians both in Japan and in China had been common victims of the same militarism. They further pressed Christians and people of the two countries to look toward and step forward in unity. The issue related to changes in the public school textbooks which were debated widely in Japan last year. This was acknowledged by the Chinese delegates as they also indicated their appreciation for the anti-militarist stand which many Japanese Christians are taking today. The National Christian Council in Japan will return the invitation for Chinese delegates to visit Japan next year.

SHOJI Tsutomu



## DISCRIMINATION AGAINST BURAKU CAUSED BY CONCEPT OF THE CHOSEN

Discrimination against the Buraku is created and supported by particular ideology, law and religion. The idea that the Japanese are a pure, and chosen race acutely affects this problem.

The Japanese during World War II maintained this chosen arrogance, and supposedly gave it up at the defeat of the war. However, the present ruling class is busily creating this chosen people concept again. For example, it is often said that the Japanese have been one race from the beginning of history. The recent White Paper of the Self Defence Force says, "There is only one race in this land which has no division socially or nationally. The independence and the unity of people continue in this land. There is hardly any other country which is inhabited by one race, one state, and one language of 100 million population. True patriotism is not only loving peace and the country, but having enthusiasm to guard the nation in the event of national crisis."

It is dangerous to return to the old emphasis of national unity as was the thrust of World War II. Clearly, it is historical fact that the Japanese are made up of a variety of races. Once, we forced the Taiwanese and the Koreans to become Japanese. The concept of the Japanese as chosen is related to the myth of the emperor's divinity and his family's pure Japanese blood, for the imperial family claims never to have intermarried with another race. Those who benefit from this myth fear that once the Japanese no longer recognize the purity of the imperial family, the race itself will lose its image of purity. Confusion results in the family and school for those who challenge the concept of the chosen, yet it is precisely this concept that kindles the fire of discrimination against the native Ainu people of Hokkaido, the Buraku people, and

against Koreans in Japan.

The above summary was translated from an article by Rev. MUNAKATA Motoi which appeared in Shakai Kan Dayori.

## NCC-J RAISES MONEY FOR KOREAN CENTER

NCC-J has made a commitment to support the construction of the Korean Christian Center in Ikuno, Osaka, with the directorship of Mr. LEE Chung Il. Fundraising began in November 1982 with the goal of ¥10 million, but up to the present only ¥500,000 has been donated.

The total construction of the Center has been estimated to cost ¥380 million, of which ¥200 million was raised by churches in West Germany, U.S.A., Korean Churches in Japan, and even financial assistance from the Japanese government. ¥180 million is still unpaid as the fundraising continues.

## NCC-J VICE-CHAIR TAKES POSITION IN U.S.

Rev. KOMINAMI Shoichi, the Vice-Chairperson of NCC-J resigned from the post when he accepted a three year assignment to serve a Japanese congregation at St. Mary's Anglican Church in Los Angeles, California. He began September 21.

Rev. KOMINAMI commented before leaving for the U.S.A., "I accepted the chance with appreciation, for my participation in the NCC's various activities has expanded my understanding of mission."

*We can best appreciate  
the splendor of a sunrise  
if we have kept watch  
through the dark  
(From the political prisoners  
of the Philippines.)*

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